

2332 '99 MAY 18 P1:34

April 20, 1999

Dr. Jane Henney, Commissioner
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Commissioner Henney:

I watched with interest last night the Dateline NBC report on Listeria, one of several types of bacteria that the federal government and others are trying to keep out of our foods. I laud the efforts being made to insure that our food supply is safe and free from harmful bacteria, however, I do have one additional concern that I would like to bring to your attention.

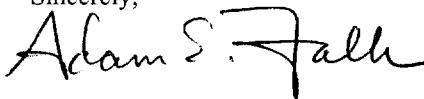
During the Dateline report they showed footage of one of the Costco meat processing plants to illustrate how places are taking steps to sterilize equipment in order to prevent the growth of Listeria. While again, I commend Costco and others who are trying to prevent this harmful bacteria from getting into our food supply, I was surprised to see that they were sterilizing the equipment with what appeared to be a disinfectant solution (they had a spray bottle and were spraying down the meat processing equipment).

I couldn't help but to think that as a result of the sterilization process they were employing, chemical agents from their disinfectant solution, if that is what they were using, were also making its way into our food supply. As you know, many chemical compounds have been linked to several types of illness, including a variety of forms of cancer. This is troubling. Certainly there must be a way to sterilize the equipment with non-toxic, non-harmful agents that do not pose a health threat to people consuming the food.

No one can underscore the importance of making sure the food supply is safe – safe from bacteria and safe from other harmful things such as carcinogens and other chemical agents. It would be a shame if solving one problem just created another. Therefore, can you please use your offices to make sure that these places prevent the spread of Listeria and other harmful bacteria, but also employ sterilization techniques that are not harmful to people who consume their products.

Thank you for your time and interest.

Sincerely,

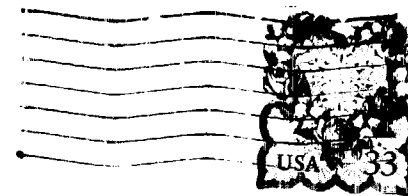


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